

November 4, 2007

The Honorable Phil Isenberg and Members
Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairman Isenberg and Members of the Task Force:

I am a resident of Rio Vista, a member of the City Council, and a former long-time resident (over 40 years) of Sacramento. The Delta is and has been of great importance to me as an individual and to the City of Rio Vista. I have carefully followed the activities of the Stakeholder's Group as well as reviewed many of the reports and suggestions for how to "rescue" the Delta, including the two Task Force draft "Vision for California's Delta." I would like to make some observations and comments. These comments do not represent an official position by the City or City Council of Rio Vista, but are the result of my own research.

- The overarching concern as stated by the Department of Water Resources is to continue the current and future shipments of Delta water to San Joaquin Valley and Southern California. In their workshop and presentation in Rio Vista earlier this year, it was clearly stated to me by one of the presenters that their main concern was earthquakes since that might breach the levees and disrupt water conveyance. They were not overly concerned with flooding since that likely would not interrupt conveyance of water out of the Delta. As a resident of the Delta, this to me is short sighted and a narrow focus on the problems of the Delta, since flooding will impact the economic base of the entire Delta as well as all the cities that depend upon the water. In addition, I feel this bias is present in the draft versions of the Delta Vision.
- Although the draft report states that the writers do not envision any increases in available supplies, it does not address the likelihood that by continuing the current exports, water available for Delta communities, farming, ecosystem maintenance and salinity control will decrease over time. The recent reports on global warming, the reductions in the Arctic ice sheet and it's impact on weather in California all indicate that we will not be able to rely on continued winter snow packs in the Sierra to the extent we have had. We must plan for ongoing drought conditions throughout Northern California. We can no longer afford "business as usual" in the Delta, which includes taking a hard look at water exports, the massive implementation of water conservation statewide, and managing our agriculture. There also needs to be planning for increased water storage (not necessarily new dams) and replenishment of aquifers, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley and areas where the water table has plummeted. We must also plan for increased flooding if warmer rains decrease the snow pack and require greater releases from the dams in the Delta watershed during wet times. The river and sloughs have not been dredged for many, many years, and increased silting has reduced the channels and allows a lesser volume of water to flow during high water episodes. Dredging (even with the heavy metals and other pollutants in the spoils) needs to be done, which would greatly decrease the flooding potential and the pressure on the levees.
- Agriculture is still the most important piece of the California economy, not only to the state but to the nation, where we produce 25% of the agricultural products used in the US, not to mention the importance of agricultural exports to other countries. The Delta is an area of rich farmland. Yes, there has been significant subsidence over the years, but as the report from San Joaquin County states, subsidence has decreased significantly and no longer plays an important role in levee stability. There are other impacts on levee

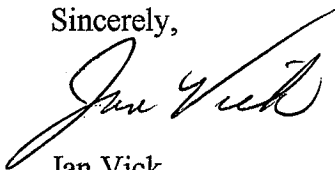
stability, including the short-sighted views of the Corps of Engineers on the best way to maintain levees; the increased urbanization in portions of the Delta and upriver, with poor attention to the true potential for flooding; lack of scientifically based levee maintenance; and, a general unwillingness to look at the issue from a wide regional view. Agriculture in the Delta must be protected, and the rivers and sloughs must be protected from pesticide runoff and degradation. Agriculture and wildlife can be good neighbors if managed properly.

- The issue of a peripheral canal is of paramount importance. I was opposed to the canal when first presented in the 70's and am opposed now. There is NO scientific data on how a canal would impact the Delta as a whole. When significant amounts of water are removed from the Sacramento River, it will impact fisheries, water collection, salinity, the Suisun Marsh, agriculture and the entire Delta ecosystem. There have been no studies or quantification of what these impacts are likely to be, especially when water flow resulting from climate changes will likely radically change from current conditions. The Western Delta and Suisun Marsh would be degraded by increased salinity, the extent of which is not known. It is generally agreed that salinity has gradually encroached further upriver; making the Suisun Marsh a brackish marsh instead of the historically freshwater would have widespread ecosystem implications. Water wells near the river, such as are in Rio Vista, would be made unusable by increased salinity in the river.
- Suggestions to repair the Delta include significantly altering the Northern Delta, specifically the Yolo Bypass and the Cache Slough area to create more flood capacity, to restore wildlife habitat and create more habitat to attract the endangered Delta Smelt and other fish to these areas. I have a major concern relative to a negative impact on the City of Rio Vista, with potential to increased flooding and property loss, as well as reduction of valuable agricultural land in the area. Some proposals include taking most of Ryer Island, a major agricultural resource, and turning most of it into a marsh/tule area. In addition, it is proposed to move the intake of the North Bay Aqueduct from Barker Slough further north near Courtland. This would negatively impact the economies of those cities now dependent on this aqueduct for their water. In addition, Rio Vista will have the right to some of this water in 2016. Even now, the economic feasibility of accessing this water is difficult, and would be impossible if the aqueduct were moved further north. Although estimates for the potential of the aquifer for Rio Vista projects that at buildout (@25,000 population) the aquifer should be sufficient, this is by no means assured, especially with the unknowns of climate change; a reduction in rainfall would negatively impact the recharging of the aquifer.
- The maintenance of the levees is an important issue. We need to look at the levees not from a water conveyance aspect but from the aspect of establishing a Delta that works for agriculture, fisheries, the support of the broader ecosystem and the continued economic vitality of the entire region. There have been several suggestions to in effect return the Western Delta to tidal marshes, and basically eradicate agriculture on Sherman, Ryer, Jersey, Brannan and Bradford Island, and parts of Webb Tract, Twitchell Island and Holland Tract ("A Long Term Vision for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta" by several Bay Area environmental groups). Their plans include excavating the Montezuma Hills for borrow material to rebuild levees (page 8) and excavate most of the land comprising Brannan Island State Park to rebuild levees on Twitchell and Sherman Islands and create tidal wetlands (page 7). Although I consider myself a long-time environmentalist, I do not feel that the proposals in this report would be to the overall benefit to the Delta, the regional environment and the economy of the Delta and surrounding areas. Excavating Decker Island and making it a tidal marsh may be more feasible and provide some materials for levees. As pointed out above, dredging the river and sloughs would not only provide material for levees, but would expand the capacity of the waterways to hold additional flow during high water periods.
- The issue of Delta Highways is of major concern. I have been an active member of the Highway 12 Association working to improve safety on the highway, particularly from I-80 to I-5. Although we have

made progress on the portion between Rio Vista and I-80, the eastern portion is in need of major attention. Highway 12 is now a major east/west route between Fairfield and Lodi/Stockton and N/S I-80 and I-5. East of Rio Vista SR 12 travels over peat islands, which have subsided in the past, making the roadbed unstable. That portion over Bouldin Island is especially unstable and would likely need a causeway. In addition, the increasing truck traffic over the highway (the increases in the past 12-15 years has been dramatic) have created huge impacts to the quality of the road and has led to massive backups at the Rio Vista Bridge. It is generally agreed that ultimately we will need new bridges and a 4-lane divided highway the entire length between I-80 and I-5. There have been suggestions to reroute SR 12, including merging it with SR 160 through Isleton. It is important to improve the highway and maintain as a major east/west corridor, not sacrifice it's importance to other Delta "improvements."

The Delta is a place where agriculture, communities, wildlife, fish and recreation meet. It is a valuable place for all of California. Any solution to the sustainability of the Delta must involve all of these interests, and must particularly include the local stakeholders. As a state, we cannot continue to rob the Delta to its detriment and to the benefit of large agricultural and urban interests in the southern part of the state. If we let the Delta degrade any more, everyone in California will suffer. It is time to take a long-range and holistic approach to our state water needs, our regional land use planning, the needs of agriculture, fish and wildlife and local communities. This fragile and complex resource must not be allowed to degrade until there is nothing left for our great-grandchildren. We must look far into the future to determine how best to protect this precious resource.

Sincerely,



Jan Vick
632 Meadowbrook Lane
Rio Vista, CA 94571
707-374-5025
<seawing@frontiernet.net.>